NOTES AND COMMUNICATIONS

UKHDŪD

The martyrdom of the Christians of Najrān at the hands of the Jewish Dhū Nuwās has been a subject of discussion by scholars for some time, but there can be no doubt now of the historicity of the massacre of a group of Christians there. The word *ukhdūd*, however, associated with the massacre, generally rendered as ' trench ', never seems to me to have been given any very satisfactory explanation. Madīnat al-Ukhdūd, the existence of which was made known to us by Halévy some time ago, lies on the south bank of the main course of the Wādī Najrān. H. St. J. B. Philby [1] has quite recently provided a map of the Wādī and a description of Ukhdūd itself.

The name Ukhdūd as applied to the old town of Najrān is not new, for al-Hamdānī [2] refers to it as *al-hajar al qadīmah mawḍi' al-Ukhdūd* ' the old town, the site of al-Ukhdūd '. Philby reports that the castle of the old town is surrounded by a moat or trench, and we might indeed consider this as a likely site of the massacre. On the other hand from new data at my disposal I propose to offer some tentative alternatives to, or modifications of the traditional explanation.

There is the possibility that fire-walking was part of the old religion in Southern Arabia. Fire-walking still takes place, for example, at Sufyān near Lahej, the festival falling in 1954 on about 25 April.[3] Bā Makhramah [4] makes passing mention of *Qaryat al-shaikh Sufyān bi-jihat al-Yaman* ' the village of the shaikh Sufyān in the land of the Yemen '. If this locality is to be identified with the place a quarter of a mile from Lahej the name is then at least 400 years old. The name *mikrīb* is applied to this part of the *ziyārah* ceremony, or to the place upon which one fire-walks ; on this point I am not quite certain. A fire is made of palm-trunks and the fire-walkers are said to walk over the hot embers. Perhaps the curious fate of the Christian martyrs was in some way connected with a *mikrīb*.

The *Tāj al-'arūs* [5] discussing *ukhdūd*, reads, ' the flood (*sail*) *khadda* in the earth (*arḍ*) when it splits it by its running (flowing). The *mikhaddah* is an

[1] *Arabian highlands*, Ithaca, N.Y., 1952, 236 seq., 266.

[2] *Ṣifat jazīrat al-'Arab*, ed. D. H. Müller, Leiden, 1884–91, I, 169.

[3] My notes for 1954 mention a procession round Lahej town for the saint. There were three *bayāriq* with bells. The Manṣab belonged to the aboriginal racial group known as the Ḥijrīs. The *mikrīb* is outside Lahej and is attended by Majādhīb who would, for example, fall into a well in their state of ecstasy if they were not restrained. Women attend this festival as well as men. This *ziyārah* is specially favoured by Aden Indians, Muslims or Hindus, both men and women. *Al-Nahḍah* (Aden, 21 December 1951), III, CV, p. 7, remarked folk (*sha'bi*) dances there, men and women dancing together, and the *ṭunburah* (lute) playing. The description runs, والمكريب عبارة عن حرق اعواد من الخشب الصلب حتى تصبح جمراً احمر ثم يأتى المجاذيب ويدوسون على هذه الجمرات الحمراء بأقدامهم الحافية العارية كأنهم يدوسون على قطع من الثلج.

[4] *Fatāwā* in photocopy in SOAS, fol. 238b.

[5] *Tāj al-'arūs*, II, 343.

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iron instrument (*ḥadīdah*) with which one *khadds* the ground, i.e. splits it '. I have seen iron bars used to split the rock to make *naqābahs* in Ḥaḍramawt but do not think this name was applied to them. One might deduce then that an *ukhdūd* could also apply to a course carved out by flood-water. My field notes on irrigation in Dathīnah in fact record *khudād* as ' a sort of furrowing in the ground by a *sail* (flood), a hole, always long-wise '.[1] Hirschberg[2] indeed states that a Monophysite author says the Christians were killed in a *wādī*.

The contemporary writer Ṣalāḥ al-Bakrī[3] has described al-Jurbah in Yāfi'ī territory as situated on a *tell*, surrounded by *akhādīd 'amīqah malī'ah bi-nabāt al-dhurah* ' deep *ukhdūds* filled with the millet plant '. These are evidently not trenches in our sense of the word, though they might be long narrow fields. I think he may well mean something of this sort banked at the sides with great ranges of mud wall composed of the spoil removed each year from the fields and heaped on the banks at the edge. I have not asked Ṣalāḥ why he used *akhādīd*, but it seems strange that an Arab writer to-day should employ such a word if he had not heard it, or something like it, used in the colloquial language.

This root also does still exist in the agricultural vocabulary of Southern Arabia, and I first remarked it on Hermann von Wissmann's map of Wādī 'Amd. It also occurs, without comment or explanation, as a toponym in the near-by Wādī Rakhyah in the *Shāmil* of 'Alawī b. Ṭāhir where Al-Khudūd li-'l-Baqqārah Āl Ballaith appears.[4] I questioned the 'Aṭṭās Saiyids of Ḥuraiḍah about this name and was shown both diagrammatically and on the ground what a *khadūd* was. As it is intended to publish a short account of this irrigation system separately, let it suffice to say that the *khadūd* is the field in a series irrigated by a flood channel which is watered sixth and last in that series. The *khadūds* which I saw in the Wādī Tajrūb at Ḥuraiḍah were all surrounded by high banks. In the town of Shibām similar fields are often surrounded by banks of perhaps 15 ft. in height or even more, which must have been formed by centuries of dumping of the spoil of the flood-water at the side of the field.

If the *khadūd* and *ukhdūd* are to be made equivalent it might be that the Najrān martyrs were assembled in such a banked field with soldiers standing on the bank itself.

R. B. SERJEANT

[1] cf. article ' Khadda ' in *Gloss. daṭ.*

[2] J. W. Hirschberg, ' Nestorian sources of North-Arabian traditions on the establishment and persecution of Christianity in Yemen ', *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*, xv, 1939–49, 321–38.

[3] *Fī sharq al-Yaman*, Cairo, 1374/1955, 37.

[4] Microfilm in SOAS, p. 132. It is said that this vast work is about to be printed in Singapore in a somewhat revised form.

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SAINT SERGIUS

In the Siḥīl Quarter or Ward of Tarīm is to be found the Masjid Nabī Allāh Jarjīs—at least so the educated pronunciation of his name runs, but, said my informant, he is ordinarily called Sarjīs.

The name appears, without vocalization of course in any of the sources I quote, in *al-Mashra' al-rawī* [1] in the form Sarjīs, but reference is made to his mosque [2] *infra* as Masjid Jarjīs. From a notice in the *Manāqib al-'Aidarūs* [3] we have the record of the existence of the Masjid Sarjīs as long ago as the time of the famous Ḥaḍramī saint Sa'd al-Suwainī (ob. A.D. 1453).[4] Again the Ḥuraiḍah MS of the *Manāqib Āl Qushair* alludes to the *majrā sail Khailah taḥt Masjid Sarjīs* ' the flood-course of al-Khailah, beside the Mosque of Sarjīs '. Al-Khailah is one of the *wādīs* of Tarīm city, and I surmise that it may be this name that gives rise to the town's nickname, *khailah khailatain* ' a horse (nay !) two horses '. If so one may deduce that the Siḥīl Quarter is one of the most ancient parts of the city, especially as the nickname is said to be the exclamation of a Tarīmī on seeing the first Muslim forces camped outside its walls in pagan times.

The prophet Sarjīs is generally reckoned in Tarīm to be pre-Islāmic, and *al-Mashra' al-rawī* [1] relates that many pious Tarīmīs have met with the prophet al-Khiḍr there. The name is immediately reminiscent of Sergius ; that such foreign names were not unknown in ancient Arabia is proven from Hamdānī's [5] reference to Romanus al-Kalbī, and it seems that the memory of such a name has even persisted down to our own times in the case of the ancient king Decianus in a local legend recorded by Philby.[6] The name Sarjīs itself appears in the *Sīrah*.[7]

My attention has been drawn by Dr. J. B. Segal to the statement of Henri Charles [8] that the name Sergius has always been popular among Arabic-speaking Christians. The Bedouin, he thinks, would come into touch with sanctuaries of this saint, for from A.D. 354 oratories of Saint Sergius were very numerous in the western Limes, as well as churches and chapels. The splendid cathedral of Bosra was dedicated to the saints Sergius and Bakos, and there was a sanctuary of Sergius at the Ghassanid centre of Jabiyat. As late as A.D. 609–10 a church at Babisqa was dedicated to Saint Sergius, and both Justinian and Chosroes II

[1] Muḥ. b. Abī Bakr al-Shillī, *al-Mashra' al-rawī*, Cairo, A.H. 1319, I, 141. A list of mosques also occurs in the British Museum MS *al-Tiryāq al-shāf* of 'Umar b. Muḥ. Bā Shaibān, f. 199a, but it adds nothing to the *Mashra'*.

[2] op. cit., II, 239.

[3] Photocopy in SOAS, miracle no. 19.

[4] My 1953 notes say that the Masjid Nabī Allāh Jarjīs consists of seven mosques, and the last person who built it was a certain Ḥasan al-Wari'. Other mosques in Tarīm are said to be composed of several mosques, each named after the person who constructed or reconstructed that particular portion.

[5] *Ṣifat jazīrat al-'Arab*, op cit., 180.

[6] op. cit., 342, Dakyanus who flourished 300 years before Muḥammad.

[7] A. Guillaume, *The life of Muḥammad*, O.U.P., 1955, 668.

[8] *Le christianisme des Arabes nomades sur le Limes*, Paris, 1936, 29 seq.

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who gave ex-voto gifts, had a strong interest in this sanctuary. Dr. E. Ullendorff has further pointed out to me that Saint Sergius is mentioned in Ethiopic sources,[1] Sergius and Bacchus having their festival on 10 Ṭĕḳĕmt.

There is, however, a further possibility in that the *Book of the Himyarites*[2] alludes to the presbyter Sergios, a Roman,[3] and again Sergius,[4] perhaps the same person, was one of the Christians martyred by Masrūq. The Syriac name has exactly the same form as our Arabic Sarjīs.

In conclusion it seems that we have to do with a Christian saint whose memory, or whose name at least, has survived some fourteen centuries. A tradition has even survived, of course, that Ḥaḍramawt had itself been Christian[5]. The allusions to the lamps in the monk's cell in Imra'u 'l-Qais[6] may, like his references to Dammūn and 'Andal, have specifically Ḥaḍramawt in mind, for the verse shows characteristically South Arabian diction. If the Sergius of al-Khailah be the same personage as the saint beloved by the northern Arabian Bedouin of former times, then his cult had surely extended a far cry to the south, but Tarīm is not so very distant from the Christian communities of Najrān which may even have survived as late as the thirteenth century A.D.[7]

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[1] William Wright, *Catalogue of the Ethiopic manuscripts in the British Museum*, London, 1877, p. 160.

[2] Ed. Axel Moberg, Lund, 1924, p. cix, MS f. 14b.

[3] It is interesting to remark that there were also presbyters from Ḥīrah and Abyssinia.

[4] op. cit., p. cxvi, MS f. 24b.

[5] C. F. Beckingham and R. B. Serjeant, ' A journey by two Jesuits from Dhufār to Ṣan'ā' in 1590 ', *Geog. Jour.*, cxv, 4–6, 1950, 197.

[6] C. J. Lyall, *Commentary on ten ancient Arabic poems*, Calcutta, 1894, Ar. text p. 26. *Aw maṣābīḥu rāhibin ahāna 'l-salīṭa bi-'l-dhubāli 'l-mufattali. Salīṭ* is said to be Yemenite for sesame-oil by the lexicons—which is still true to-day; both the other words are used commonly for ' wick ', though one says *fatīlah* and not *mufattal*.

[7] Ibn al-Mujāwir, *Tārīkh al-Mustabṣir*, ed. O. Löfgren, Leiden, 1951–4, 209. The population consisted of Jews, Christians, and Muslims, each religion constituting one-third of the population, but Ibn al-Mujāwir does not reveal whether this is contemporary observation or merely quotation from earlier sources. A survival of the Christian community into the Middle Ages is a little unexpected, but the Jewish community, as can be ascertained from Philby, loc. cit., survived up till its final exodus a few years ago.

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A 31 SYLLABLE POEM

Megumi mote	恵 持 て
Hagukumi kureshi	育 み く れ し
Igirisu wo	イ ギ リ ス を
Kansha sasagete	感 謝 捧 げ て
Kare wa yukunari	彼 は 行 く な り

An adopted son of Britain,
To whom every kindness has been given,
The time for him has come
To join the great shadow,
Full of gratitude he now bids farewell to
this beloved land of Albion.

B. MATSUKAWA (1890–1959)
Lecturer in Japanese, 1943–55

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